

42
PERFORMANCE ON FORTY-SECOND
WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART
AT PHILIP MORRIS

Spring 1999

IMPULSIVE
BEHAVIOR

*New, interdisciplinary performances in which
improvisation plays a central role*

Janis Brenner & Dancers

Bruce Andrews, Edwin Torres, and Charles Bernstein

Liu Sola and Amina Claudine Myers

The Poool

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART AT PHILIP MORRIS

Janis Brenner & Dancers

presents

THE MEMORY OF ALL THAT

March 25 8 pm

Conceived, directed, and staged by Janis Brenner

Choreographed by Janis Brenner in collaboration with the performers

Performed by company members Kyla Barkin, Marisa Demos, Sherri Hellman, Kun-Yang Lin, and Luis Tentindo, and special guests Bob Gainer, Consuelo Gutierrez, Carlo Pellegrini, Alice Teirstein, and Emma Teitelbaum

SPECIAL THANKS

Janis Brenner would like to thank the cast for their generosity, courage, talent, and unwavering spirit. She and the cast would also like to thank: Theo Bleckmann, Mitchell Bogard, Zephryn Conte, Ken Maldonado, Michelle Mathesius and the LaGuardia High School of the Performing Arts, Howard Richman, Debra Singer and the staff of the Whitney Museum of American Art at Philip Morris, Stephanie and Paul Teitelbaum, as well as all of the company's individual contributors, and the company's volunteers. The development of this work was made possible in part through support from the Harkness Foundation for Dance and the Manhattan Community Arts Fund, administered by the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council.

42

PERFORMANCE ON FORTY-SECOND

Program is subject to change. No unauthorized photography, audio-, or videotaping is permitted.

Dancer and choreographer Janis Brenner presents the New York premiere of *The Memory of All That*, which explores the dynamic interaction between the power of movement and the power of words. In this piece, dancers delve into their memories and recount personal stories from their lives as their bodies are physically manipulated in unexpected ways by other cast members. The intergenerational profile of the group reveals the ways in which people of such diverse ages synthesize and share memories. The cast, made up of professional dancers from Brenner's company and other multidisciplinary performers, developed this piece through a process involving writing, interviews, and movement exercises. While some aspects of the piece are predetermined, in certain sections the spoken dialogue is improvised while in others it is the movement which is spontaneous. In still other parts, both the vocal work and movement is left to chance.

Brenner's specific interest in improvisation derives in part from her studies at the Nikolais-Louis Laboratory in the 1970s where she studied with Alwin Nikolais, Murray Louis, and Phyllis Lamhut, and where improvisation was a central part of the rigorous daily training. Her interdisciplinary approach derives in part from her work with Meredith Monk, who is known for combining vocal work with movement as well as integrating nonprofessional dancers into the work.

ABOUT THE COMPANY

Janis Brenner & Dancers, founded in 1985 by dancer and choreographer Janis Brenner, is based in New York but has performed in Asia, Europe, and throughout the United States. In New York, their work has been presented by organizations such as Dance Theater Workshop, Danspace Project at St. Mark's Church, the Fiorello Festival, the Downtown Arts Festival, the 92nd Street Y Harkness Dance Center, and the Whitney Museum of American Art at Equitable Center. The company offers a wide range of residency activities and teaching styles, and is known for the caliber and depth of its emotionally authentic and musically diverse work.

ARTISTS' BIOGRAPHIES

Janis Brenner is an award-winning dancer and choreographer, singer, and teacher, who is the artistic director of Janis Brenner & Dancers. Known internationally as a singular performer with a multifaceted artistic range, Brenner has toured twenty-five countries as a soloist and with her company, and is a sought-after teacher conducting workshops in technique, improvisation, composition, repertory, and vocal work. Brenner was a soloist in the Murray Louis Dance Company (1977-84), where she worked with important figures such as Plácido Domingo, Alwin Nikolais, Rudolph Nureyev, and Joseph Papp, as well as the Dave Brubeck Quartet. She has also worked extensively with Annabelle Gamson's company (1984-87) and served as the movement director/choreographer of Michael Moschen in *Motion* (1988-92). In addition to choreographing and dancing in her own company's work, she has been a member of the Meredith Monk Vocal Ensemble since 1990. She recently released a debut CD with Theo Bleckmann *Mars Cantata* (EARrelevant Music, 1998). Brenner has been honored with numerous grants and awards, including a 1997 New York Dance and Performance ("Bessie") Award for her performance in Meredith Monk's work, a 1996 Lester Horton Award for Choreography, a 1993 Leach Fellowship for Outstanding Achievement in the Performing Arts, and a 1986 New York Dance on Camera Festival Award.

Kyla Barkin, a graduate of UCLA, has worked with Los Angeles Modern Dance & Ballet, Eric Butler, and Stephen Koplowitz. She currently performs with Doug Elkins Dance Co. and Janis Brenner & Dancers. In addition to performing and choreographing her own work, Barkin is also a fitness instructor.

Marisa Demos is an honors graduate of SUNY, Purchase, who has toured internationally with her university-affiliated dance company. She is a member of Janis Brenner & Dancers and also performs with the Sean Curran Company.

Bob Gainer most recently performed in Meredith Monk's *A Celebration Service* at Danspace Project at St. Mark's Church and in Tennessee Williams' *Night of the Iguana* at Columbia University. He has performed with the Bloomsburg Theatre Ensemble, The Omaha Magic Theatre, and Mabou Mines Experimental Theatre Company. Gainer has also participated in dance concerts and plays at Bucknell University, where he teaches acting and directing, and directs university productions.

Consuelo Gutierrez was born and raised in Guatemala City. She is a poet, writer, mother, singer, and songwriter. She is the author of *Te Amo De Todas Maneras*, *Ardiente Verano*, and *Extasis*. For twenty-five years, Gutierrez worked at St. John's University as a matron. Since retiring two years ago, she has focused on working in the arts in various capacities.

Sherri Hellman graduated from Adelphi University with a BFA in Dance in 1989. Hellman is the founder/director of the Creative Arts Studio in Brooklyn, a multidisciplinary arts center for children and adults, and is a movement instructor at Brooklyn Heights Montessori School. She has worked with Sara Hook, Murray Louis, Christopher Gillis, Joanna Shaw, Sabina Peck, and Sue Bernhard, among others, and has danced with Janis Brenner & Dancers since 1990, restaging Brenner's work internationally.

Kun-Yang Lin, a native of Taiwan, has performed with numerous companies and has presented his own work throughout Asia, Europe, and the United States, and at New York venues such as Danspace Project at St. Mark's Church, the 92nd Street Y, and the Lincoln Center Out-of-Doors Festival. He is currently the lead dancer and associate artistic director of Mary Anthony Dance Theatre, as well as a member of Janis Brenner & Dancers. Lin is also on the faculty of Mary Anthony Dance Studio, Peridance, and H.B. Studio.

Carlo Pellegrini is a professional speaker, executive development and creativity consultant, and a designer of team-building seminars across the country. As president of the company The Juggling MATRIX, he helps executives in technology, healthcare, and publishing businesses implement organizational and personal change. His background in dance, acting, circus, sales, advertising, and public relations is the basis for his work.

Alice Teirstein, a New York choreographer, dancer, and teacher, is the director of the dance program at the Fieldston School in the Bronx, where she has worked for the past two decades. Teirstein is also the founding director of Young Dancemakers Co., a free, city-wide summer project for New York City high school students. Her choreography includes numerous works performed in major New York dance venues, site-specific works for New York City parks, and recent duets with Stuart Hodes.

Emma Teitelbaum is in the fifth grade at Brooklyn Heights Montessori School. She is a member of the Performance Workshop at the Creative Arts Studio, which performed on the RuPaul Show. As a member of the Brooklyn Children's Ensemble, Teitelbaum has sung with the New York Pops, Big Apple Chorus, New York Christmas Revels, and at the Lincoln Center Christmas Tree Ceremony. In addition, she studies tap, modern dance, and piano.

Luis Tentindo, a visual and performing artist, has trained with Steve Paxton, Risa Steinberg, and Janet Eilber and has performed works by Martha Graham, Anna Sokolow, and Kurt Jooss. He is a member of the Doug Elkins Dance Co. and Janis Brenner & Dancers, and dances with Ben Munisteri. Tentindo has also taught dance throughout New York and the United States.

UPCOMING EVENTS: This event is part of *Impulsive Behavior*, a four-part series of interdisciplinary performances in which improvisation plays a central role. The series will continue with: poets Bruce Andrews (collaborating with dancer Sally Silvers), Edwin Torres (collaborating with musician Sean Blacklung), and Charles Bernstein (April 8); composer and vocalist Liu Sola performing with gospel singer and pianist Amina Claudine Myers and dancer Yin Mei (April 15); and the video collaborative The Pool, which joins forces with musicians Hoppy Kamiyama, David Weinstein, and Jason Hwang, along with experimental architects Liminal Projects (May 13).

Whitney Museum of American Art at Philip Morris

Janis Brenner & Dancers

Program Insert

Additional Credits:

All music composed by Howard Richman except for the following: the opening piece, which is the prelude from J.S. Bach's *Cello Suite No. 1 in G Major*, performed by Pablo Casals; "Jade" from *Songs From the Hill* composed by Meredith Monk, performed by Janis Brenner; the "Card Memory" section, which was composed by Zephryn Conte; and the finale, "Death is a Long, Long Sleep," which is a traditional English canon.

Opening Text: Excerpt from Marcel Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past*

Poem: *A Whack on the Side of the Head*, adapted by Roger von Oech

In addition to those individuals and groups listed in the program, Janis Brenner & Dancers would like to thank many other people who contributed to the development of *The Memory of All That*:

Actors' Creative Experience, Ltd., Lisbeth Bagnold and Paul Lamonia, Jill Bogard, Leslie Brenner and Frank Steinman, Maeve Butler, Bill and Judy Campbell, Marsha Fields and Shelley Shapiro, Carol Fonda, Judy Gantz, Mary Ellen Geisser, Nancy Lee Giller, Bruce Hellman, Sherri Hellman/Creative Arts Studio, Susan Hellman-Zanni, William Holahan, Marjolijn de Jager, Janet Justis, Anne and Peter Koletzke, Carol and Al Landess, Francine Lombardo, Sandy Miller and Evy Leonard, Meredith Monk, One Dream Sound, Hap Palmer, Norman and Janice Pastorek, Carol Petersen, Christine Reisner, Michelle Rosen, Amy Schettini Consulting/Management and Frank R. Schettini, Gail Siegal, Anne Sobel, Susan Sokol, Ken Tabachnick, Alvin Teirstein, George Werner, Micki Wesson, Mia Zaripe, and assistants Chrissy Chu, Eileen Loeb, and Danielle Zotter.

IMPROVISATION IN CONTEXT

Impulsive Behavior presents four interdisciplinary events in which improvisation plays a central role. All of the artists—dancer and choreographer Janis Brenner, composer and vocalist Liu Sola, poets Bruce Andrews, Edwin Torres, and Charles Bernstein, and the video collaborative The Pool—have developed new projects which only assume their final form in front of public audiences, taking place in real time and creating exciting opportunities for the unexpected. While these performers represent some of today's most experimental artists, their work continues a long tradition of incorporating the spontaneous into live performance.

Throughout this century, jazz, blues, and "new music" performers have been important innovators in harnessing spontaneous expression to discover new musical forms. With distinctive and intense styles of playing, these musicians inspired artists in other disciplines to transcend the limitations of genre and idiom. Many of the participants in **Impulsive Behavior** are influenced by avant-garde musical figures such as Albert Ayler, Derek Bailey, Ornette Coleman, John Coltrane, Fred Frith, and John Zorn.

The integration of improvisation into interdisciplinary projects involving music, dance, poetry, theater, and the visual arts was characteristic of many avant-garde artistic movements of the early twentieth century. The Futurists, for example, touted improvisation and simultaneity as a means of relating art to everyday life. In contrast, Dada artists experimented with chance in visual, literary, and musical works to eliminate traditional content and artistic values. The Surrealists, too, were interested in spontaneous, or "automatic," creative activity, which they thought provided direct access to authentic expressions of the human subconscious.

Following World War II, many artists continued to experiment with improvisation. The influential composer and teacher John Cage incorporated chance procedures and everyday sounds into his revolutionary musical compositions. By the 1950s, Cage's innovations were widely influential, as other artists started to apply his ideas to dance and poetry. Dancer and choreographer Merce Cunningham, who often worked with Cage, integrated the idea of chance into his choreography and proposed that ordinary movements, such as walking or standing, be considered valid dance elements. At the same time, the dancer and choreographer Ann Halprin independently also offered new ideas about dance that ran parallel to Cunningham's. In addition, figures such as Paul Taylor and Alwin Nikolais started their own dance companies and made significant contributions toward breaking out of the formalized parameters of modern dance.

By the early 1960s, these artists as well as many of their students continued to investigate the transformative role of chance systems. For instance, the loosely affiliated group of performers, writers, and publishers known as Fluxus was heavily influenced by Cage's work; many, such as the poet Jackson Mac Low and the poet and composer Dick Higgins, had been students in Cage's class at the New School for Social Research in New York. Fluxus artists rejected conventional aesthetics in favor of more pared-down notions of art. Their performances often eschewed formal costumes or sets and often revolved around seemingly unimportant gestures and ordinary activities. The Judson Dance Theater, which developed concurrently with Fluxus, placed even greater emphasis on chance in choreography and "task-oriented" movements. Many notable participants, such as Trisha Brown, Simone Forti, Steve Paxton, Yvonne Rainer, and Meredith Monk, had studied with either Cunningham or Halprin. They developed alternative dance vocabularies that disconnected dance from its dramatic and psychological underpinnings, expanding the very definitions of dance.

The artists in **Impulsive Behavior** draw on these legacies and at the same time offer new visions of how improvisation and chance can enrich live performance.

PERFORMANCE ON 42ND is a program of the Whitney Museum of American Art at Philip Morris, offering free music, dance, and theater performances to the public.

PRODUCTION STAFF

Elizabeth Chaney, Lighting Designer

James Lo, Sound Engineer

Kenyatta Hills, Production Assistant

Paula Court, Photographer

Character Generators Inc., Video Documentation

**WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART
AT PHILIP MORRIS STAFF**

Beth Venn, Curator, Touring Exhibitions and Director of Branch Museums

Debra Singer, Branch Curator and Producer, PERFORMANCE ON 42ND

Jeff Hopkins, Gallery Coordinator, Education

Min Lee, Gallery Assistant, Exhibitions

**WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART
AT PHILIP MORRIS**

120 Park Avenue at 42nd Street

New York, NY 10017

(917) 663-2453

The Whitney Museum of American Art at Philip Morris is funded by Philip Morris Companies Inc.

Printing courtesy of Philip Morris Companies Inc.